

Disentangling Privacy and Confidentiality

Findings and notes from the Federal Statistical
System Public Opinion Monitoring Survey

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Privacy and Confidentiality: What do Respondents Actually Understand?

- Legal and ethical impetus to understand Respondents' attitudes towards Privacy and Confidentiality
- Pragmatically, need to insure respondent buy-in through pledges
- Work at NCHS, Census, and in OMB interagency committees

Questions Posed by Previous Work

- How and why do respondents decide to divulge “private” data?
- Do respondents trust and understand pledges of confidentiality? If so, why and how?
- Would this trust extend to data sharing and administrative data linkage?

Federal Statistical System Public Opinion Monitoring Survey (FSS POMS)

- Survey overview
- Administrative data sharing and linkage
- Evaluation procedures

FSS POMS Evaluation

- Privacy and Confidentiality are conflated

FSS POMS Evaluation

- *FSS 5a. Sometimes federal statistical agencies need to get information such as employment history or retirement benefits. They can do it by getting the information from other government agencies or by asking people for it directly in a survey. How do you yourself feel about federal agencies trying to save government money and save people's time by sharing information with each other? Are you strongly in favor, somewhat in favor, somewhat against, or strongly against?*
- *FSS 5b. Some people think people's privacy would be better protected if each agency collected the information directly through surveys. How do you feel about federal agencies collecting information directly? Are you strongly in favor, somewhat in favor, somewhat against, strongly against?*

FSS POMS Evaluation

- Privacy and Confidentiality are conflated
- Administrative data/linkage confusing
- People like having control of their information

FSS POMS Evaluation

- **Example from a focus group:**

P21: I just filed my taxes last night, and if there was a little check-off that said, “Would you contribute your information to the Census?” I would consider it.

Moderator: So if instead of it being an assent, if you had the control over that [the sharing] and the IRS form said, “The Census Bureau might use this information. If this is ok, check this box?” then...

P21: Yeah, that would be ok...

P17: Yes

[Other members of Group]: Yeah.

P22: And if they said, we’re not going to make you public...we’re just going to link this to a statistic...

Going Forward

- Research needs:
 - Differences between privacy and confidentiality
 - Modal differences
 - Issues of confidentiality pledge duration
- Implementation
 - Policy language
 - Focus of qualitative evaluations

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